How to Sprout RAW FOOD

Grow an Indoor Organic Garden with Wheatgrass, Bean Sprouts, Grain Sprouts, Microgreens, and More

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How to Sprout Raw Food: Grow an Indoor Organic Garden with Wheatgrass, Bean Sprouts, Grain Sprouts, Microgreens, and More

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1. Superfood Sprouts are Easy to Grow, Healthy, and Provide Year-Round Nutrition

Would you like to grow some of your own food this year? Indoors? With no sunlight or soil? At any time of the year and at all times of the year? Sprouts allow you to do all that and more. In fact, you can grow all the vegetables your body needs (plus all the protein as well) in an area that's no bigger than your microwave oven. I grow sprouts on top of my refrigerator, harvesting baskets of fresh, raw food every week without even going outside.

Growing sprouts is simple and it's cheap. Sprouts can provide you with the power-packed nutrition your body needs at a fraction of the price of store bought food. You can save money while eating right. There's no dirt, no pests, and no weeding required.

This short guide will teach you how to grow sprouts and enjoy eating them. If you like salads, I'll show you how to make delicious bowlfuls with tasty mild or spicy sprouts. If you enjoy eating cereal for breakfast, try some sprouted grains with natural malt sugars that nourish your body and taste far better than boxed cereals.

Need to lose a few pounds? Simply eating a few more sprouted beans will keep you feeling fuller and eating fewer carbs. Toss some sprouted beans, lentils, or peas into your next rice or pasta dish; they make great burgers as well. You'll find that your body absorbs the protein better when the beans are sprouted, which usually reduces flatulence as well. All this nutrition, protein, and fiber will have you shedding a few pounds in a hurry.

If you're on a raw food diet already, then sprouting is essential. Sprouting is the most reliable way to prepare grains and beans for raw consumption. Once sprouted, these foods are easier for the body to digest and can make up an important part of your diet. In addition, you can increase your quantity of homegrown fresh vegetables by sprouting some alfalfa, clover, radish, or broccoli seeds plus growing a few trays of microgreens. You can grow them all indoors, at any time of the year, no matter how cold it is outside.

Nutritionally, sprouts are powerhouses. Sprouted soy bean and mung bean sprouts contain twice the protein of their original bean seed. A cup of bean sprouts contains nearly 20% of your recommended daily allowance of vitamin C, plus iron, calcium, B vitamins, and tons of fiber. Radish sprouts

have more vitamin C than pineapples. Alfalfa sprouts contain large doses of A, B and C vitamins, plus essential minerals like calcium, magnesium, and potassium.

The picture above shows some purple cabbage microgreens growing in a tray of soil. If your screen shows it in color, you'll see the beautiful light purple stems with dark green and purple leaves. The beautiful purple/red/blue pigments in many plants are due to the presence of anthocyanins, the powerful antioxidants that make blueberries and red wine so healthy. Sprouts and microgreens often have higher concentrations of nutrients and beneficial compounds than mature plants do.

For example, broccoli sprouts contain a powerful substance called sulforaphane that has shown great promise in fighting cancer and heart disease. Its levels are 20-50 times higher in broccoli sprouts than in the actual broccoli vegetable . Researchers at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Saskatchewan have confirmed its incredible potency, which may be thousands of times more effective than antioxidants. While you could not physically eat enough broccoli in a day to get a major benefit, the lead of author of one of these studies suggested that eating just a cup or two of broccoli sprouts per day may allow your body to "correct major cardiovascular dysfunctions such as hypertension and stroke".

You can grow most sprouts indoors with no direct light or soil (except for microgreens, which need soil). They grow quickly and do not need much space to grow. Sunlight, soil, space, time, and weather are no obstacle to growing sprouts, which means you can keep growing them again and again year-round. Even in the cold winter months, when fresh food cannot be grown outside and is expensive in stores, sprouts can supply you with a fast, easy source of organic vegetables.

All sprouts are live, raw foods rich in healthy enzymes and phytonutrients. The next chapter discusses why adding raw foods to your diet is a great thing to do for your body.

2. The Benefits of Raw Food: Lose Weight, Nourish Your Body, and Stimulate Energy Levels

Raw food contains many nutrients that are lost in the cooking process. Our prehistoric ancestors ate most of their food raw until around 12,000 years ago. The human body has not yet adapted to the large quantities of cooked and processed foods we feed ourselves. This is a big reason for the high rates of diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and other chronic ailments: we are poisoning ourselves with so much over-cooked, over-processed foods.

People who switch to raw food diets (or simply include some more raw food in their diets) experience many benefits, such as weight loss and great energy levels. While I will never eat 100% raw foods, I have learned the value of including many more raw foods in my diet.

It's not that difficult to eat more raw vegetables, fruits, and nuts. The most important are dark green vegetables (or sprouts), which are packed with the vitamins and minerals your body needs. Fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and kombucha add additional enzymes and nutrition into your digestive system. You can include raw beans and grains in your diet also, but only if you sprout them first.

Sprouted grains and beans have much less starch, but they can fill you up. With better nutrition and more enzymes in your diet, you'll start to feel a lot less hungry between meals. This leads to less snacking and wiser choices. For many people, it translates to weight loss and stabilization at a healthier level.

3. Sprouting Equipment and How to Use It: Trays, Jars, Bags, Automatic Sprouters, and Wheatgrass Juicers

There are many methods of sprouting seeds, both high tech and low tech. Low tech methods include sprouting in a cloth bag, jar, or tray. Trays and jars can be lined with a wet paper towel, cloth, or growing medium that absorbs water and stays moist. Specially designed sprouting trays , sprouting jars , and sprouting bags are available online if you prefer not to rig your own setup.

To supercharge your sprouting, you can try an automatic sprouter such as the FreshLife sprouter or EasyGreen sprouter . These allow you to grow more sprouts at once, up to several pounds per week. But their biggest selling point is that they keep sprouts humid and rinsed with regular spraying. You will find more information below about each of these high and low tech devices.

The basic idea is the same: you start with some seeds, keep them moist and humid, and wait for them to sprout. Most sprouts take 3-10 days, depending on which kind of seed you use and at what stage of maturity you harvest the sprouts. For example, you can eat sprouted wheat grains in just 3-4 days, but it will take 7-10 days for the same grains to turn into wheatgrass.

As the seeds are sprouting, you will need to monitor two things. First, they need plenty of water, so you may hear your seeds asking for a refill after a couple of days. Second, any humid environment invites mold, so your sprouts need to be sprayed with fresh water or dunked in fresh water on a regular basis. How regular depends on the climate in your home, but it’s a

good bet you'll need to rinse your sprouts twice a day (once in the morning and again in the evening).

Rinsing is the only high maintenance aspect to sprouting. If you are growing only a small quantity of seeds at a time, it just takes a few seconds to dunk them in water. Make sure it's room temperature or slightly warm water, as colder temperatures will slow the growth of your seeds.

Another option is to keep a spray bottle filled with water nearby. Some people add a few drops of grapefruit seed extract or food grade hydrogen peroxide to the water, both of which will stop mold without poisoning your food. If you find you really like eating sprouts and microgreens, but the process of spraying or dunking them is taking too long, then invest in an automatic sprouter to keep things simpler. These are discussed in greater detail below.

Adding some seaweed extract to the spray water or automatic sprouter provides some nutrition for the sprouting plants, giving you more trace minerals when you eat them. Make sure you use an edible kind of seaweed extract, since some of the kinds sold as plant food in nurseries are not food grade extracts. Also, make sure it is labeled as suitable for hydroponic gardening. This means the seaweed extract is in an aqueous solution and will not clog spray bottles and sprouting machines.

Sprouting in Bags

A sprouting bag is one made of natural fiber that can absorb some water and keep the sprouts moist. Sprout bags normally are made from burlap, hemp, or another woven cloth material. You can find a selection of low priced sprout bags here . Note that some of them double as “Nut Milk Bags” for making almond milk or soy milk. One or the other can be used for both purposes as well as for straining cheese or other homesteading projects.

No additional growing medium is needed; just put a handful of seeds in the bag, get it wet, and keep up the dunking until the sprouts are ready to eat in a few days. Sprout bags can be placed flat on a tabletop or hung from a hook.

Sprouting in bags works very well for larger seeds like beans and grains. These will perform best if you collect them when they still have a short tail (as sprouted beans or grains) rather than as long, vegetable-type sprouts (like mung bean sprouts). With both jars and bags, the sprouts are really packed in tightly, so these methods of growing are not as efficient for longer sprouts. Vegetable-type sprouts will not see much light in a dark cloth bag, either, and rolling down the top tends to make a mess of falling sprouts. But these bags are a very good choice for sprouted beans and grains.

Sprouting in Jars

Most people have jars at home, whether they are Mason jars, jam jars, or pickle jars. Any old jar will do. Glass jars are not the perfect sprouting vessel, but because they are so widespread, they are a popular way to get started with sprouting.

To sprout seeds using a jar, you will need the jar, some cheesecloth or screen for the lid, and a rubber band to hold it in place. Alternatively, you can cut out the center of the old jar lid and use this to close over the breathable cheesecloth or screen lid. Any kind of seed can be sprouted in a jar, though the smallest seeds might escape through the lid when you rinse.

Here is a picture of a sprouting jar being used to grow a dense mass of alfalfa sprouts. It is followed by a picture of a screened lid. Either screen or cheesecloth can be used to provide some aeration and to drain out the water after rinsing.

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If you don’t have the perfect jar, you can buy a sprouting jar online. These come with a lid as holey as a colander and they work really well for sprouting all kinds of seeds. Here is a selection of some low priced sprout jars .

Place a tablespoon or two of seeds in your jar and cover them with water, leaving them to soak overnight. In the morning, pour out the water through the porous lid, and put the jar back in its regular position (either upright or horizontally flat), and shake it to make sure no seeds are stuck to the top. At least twice each day, cover the seeds with water again, pour it out, shake, and put the jar back in its place. After a few days, you’ll have some sprouts.

Sprouting in Trays

Alternatively, you can sprout seeds from almost any kind of tray. This works particularly well for sprouts with long shoots, such as mung beans, soy beans, or pea shoots. They can grow straight up with no restrictions. Alfalfa and any of the sandwich/salads sprouts grow well on trays, too.

You can use your own tray, which can be anything from a plastic Tupperware-type container to a nursery flat seedling tray (pictured above). Alternatively, you can find specialized trays for sale online . These are much easier to use than homemade trays, because they have drainage holes that also give the sprouting plants something to dig their roots into.

This root anchorage results in straight, taller sprouts, which will spill all over the place when grown on a truly flat surface. For a homemade tray,

you probably will need to line it with some wet paper towels or cloth to use as a growing medium. While this complicates the rinsing, it is essential for keeping the seeds moist and giving the little plants a bit of traction. I have even covered tray seeds with a wet paper towel before to lock in moisture. In addition, you will probably need to use a spray bottle to keep the seeds moist, since they would spill out of the tray if dunked.

A company called Victorio makes several models of stackable trays that are designed to allow just the right amount of water to each tray . Stackable means you can have several levels of sprouts going at once, even different types of sprouts (for example, wheat berries on level one, lentils on level two, and alfalfa on level three). They are also dishwasher safe, which eliminates a lot of the headache involved with cleaning up a sprouting operation. These Victorio trays are even cheaper than some of the plain, single-level ones that have no such bells and whistles .

I think they are an incredible bargain for anyone who wants to get started in sprouting. Here is a picture of the main Victorio sprouter, which can be stacked several trays high. At $15 or so, it’s hard to go wrong.

The growing method with trays is pretty much the same as for jars and bags. You scatter some seeds on the bottom (which you can soak beforehand in a cup or bowl, if you want). Then you keep the seeds rinsed, or sprayed, as often as possible.

Trays for Microgreens and Wheatgrass

Microgreens and wheatgrass need to grow for a few days more than other sprouts. The plants need to be more mature when you harvest them. Most sprouting devices are not appropriate for growing either one, since these plants need physical support and nutrition that is best provided by soil or a soilless growing medium. Microgreens and wheatgrass grow very well in

trays that are filled with an inch or two of potting soil or soilless medium. They also need a little more light to photosynthesize, which will turn their leaves a rich dark green. Putting a tray of them under the windowsill, even in indirect light, will activate the chlorophyll and turn them green.

You can use nursery seedling flats, pots, or any trays you have available. Milk cartons, cut down the middle to form two long halves, make great trays for microgreens and wheatgrass. In the chapters on microgreens and wheatgrass , we will cover how to grow them properly. Both of them are very simple to grow, but the procedure is different than for most sprouts.

Automatic Sprouters

If you're ready to grow more sprouts and do not have the time to rinse them, an automatic sprouter is the way to go. These devices use very little energy and water. They provide the sprouts with plenty of growing room, keep them humid, and spray them with a mist several times each hour.

There are two main models on the market. The first is the FreshLife Sprouter made by Tribest Corporation , a cylinder-shaped machine that holds water in a reservoir under the seed trays. For a few seconds each hour, the pump turns on and moves water into a rotating sprayer that mists the sprouts. You do have to change the water in the reservoir every day or two, but aside from that, the setup is quite automatic.

The FreshLife Sprouter takes up about one square foot of countertop or cabinet space. It needs a power plug (but uses very little electricity). It does not need to be near a sink, since there is no hookup for water input of output; you need to dump out the old water and fill it up yourself. You can also buy additional barrels to add more seed racks on top.

I have had a FreshLife sprouter for many years, which sits on top of my refrigerator. For sprouted beans, sprouted grains, mung bean sprouts, and salad sprouts such as alfalfa, the FreshLife is a good choice at a cheaper

price than its competitor product. It cannot handle soil for wheatgrass or microgreens, but these are easier to grow in trays anyway.

On the downside, I have always had trouble with soy bean and sunflower sprouts in the FreshLife, neither of which do all that well in this sprouter (you'll get some tasty sprouts, but the cleanup time will cause you to reconsider). I also have an extra barrel for this sprouter, but I rarely use it because despite all my efforts, one spray nozzle does not capable of keeping the sprouts at the bottom well rinsed. Using fewer seeds on the top rack helps a bit.

In summary, I would recommend the FreshLife as an entry-level automatic sprouter . It will make you great sprouted beans, sprouted grains, mung bean sprouts, and salad sprouts. And you can fit it just about anywhere in your kitchen or in another room. As long as you are not planning to use this sprouter for soybeans or sunflowers, it should provide you with excellent service.

The EasyGreen Sprouter

The EasyGreen Sprouter is slightly more expensive and needs to be connected to a sink and drain, but it is much more versatile than the Fresh Life. Overall, this is the best sprouting vessel money can buy. You can grow any kind of sprout in here with great success and you will not need to change the water on a daily basis since this is done automatically through

the sink. In my opinion, the EasyGreen is well worth the extra cost, particularly if you plan to grow microgreens or wheatgrass.

Thinking it was wise to save $100 or so, I purchased the FreshLife when I first began sprouting on a serious scale. After many years of experiments with that machine, I can say it has been very reliable and is still working just as well as the day I bought it. However, the FreshLife has its limitations, as I mentioned in discussing it above.

I also like growing microgreens and wheatgrass, but keeping them moist is a problem when I'm gone all day. So I finally broke down and ordered an EasyGreen unit . From the start, I was really impressed with it; this device can grow any kind of sprouts or microgreens completely automatically. It takes up a little more space near the sink, and thus is less convenient, but this thing is very well designed and constructed. It operates so smoothly that it takes the hassle out of sprouting.

If I had it to do over again, I would have bought an EasyGreen first instead of the alternative. The EasyGreen is a premier system that is worth every penny . The company also sells a more expensive Wheatgrass Sprouter that is specially designed for this purpose, though wheatgrass can grow fine in its regular unit too.

4. Salad and Sandwich Sprouts: Alfalfa, Clover, Radish, and Broccoli

“Everything on it?” If you reply “yes” at a deli counter, you might get some sprouts on your sandwich. For many people, these alfalfa sprouts are their only experience with sprouted, raw food. You can grow alfalfa sprouts yourself, along with the other sprouts in this category, in about 5-6 days.

Alfalfa sprouts are widely used because of their mild, fresh flavor. They are great on sandwiches and can be snuck into salads very easily as well. Clover sprouts are similar to alfalfa in both appearance and taste, making them another mild option for many eaters.

Other sprouts in this category, such as radish and broccoli sprouts, are quite spicy. Eaten sparingly, they make a zesty addition to a sandwich or salad. Imagine dipping alfalfa sprouts in horseradish and you’ll know what to expect when you take a bite of radish or broccoli sprouts!

5. Bean Sprouts: Mung Beans, Soy Beans, Lentils, Peas, and More

There are two main groups of sprouts in the bean category: sprouted beans and the longer bean sprouts. Long bean sprouts are eaten more as a vegetable than as a bean. Mung bean sprouts, for example, are harvested only after their shoots have grown into noodle-sized plants. These are the sprouts you see in Chinese food and other east Asian cuisines. They are juicy, taste mild, and are generally grown in dark conditions so that their small leaves remain yellow.

Soy beans also belong in this category, though they are usually eaten at a smaller stage with the bean still attached to the shoot. I would never eat soybean sprouts raw, because they are still pretty tough, but they taste great in cooked soups. Another type of long legume sprout, pea shoots, can be grown like mung beans or grown in soil for a few more days like wheatgrass. These legume shoots generally are cooked before eating, which may be a necessity with soybean sprouts, but mung beans sprouts are delicious and easy to digest when raw.

Beans are vigorous plants, so you can harvest their sprout shoots in just 2-5 days. To grow the longer sprouts, first soak the seeds in water overnight, then drain, rinse again, and place in a sprout jar, bag, or tray. Mung beans should be single-layered because they need to grow straighter and taller, while soybean sprouts can be packed in a little tighter. To harvest, pull them out, rinse well, and enjoy. Here is a picture of mung bean sprouts with some snow peas.

Next, we'll cover the second group of legumes, sprouted beans. Beans only need a couple of sprouting days to soften up and add a short tail to the seed. When you eat them, they still taste a lot like beans, except that they will be easier to digest and more nutritious. Any kind of bean or pea can be used for this, though the larger ones (like garbanzos and kidney beans) may still have some hard, difficult to digest parts. Small seeded legumes (such as lentils, adzuki beans, and black beans) are the most reliable for softening.

Sprouting beans is particularly easy and takes just 2-4 days. Black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, white beans, adzuki beans, cowpeas, black-eyed peas, garbanzos, peas, and lentils are just some of the legumes you can sprout. By sprouting beans, you can transform them from rock-hard seeds to edible sprouts in a matter of a few days. Sprouting beans reduces the starch in them, increases the protein, and makes many of the nutrients more bio-available than they would be in cooked beans.

You do not need any special equipment to sprout beans. Jars, bags, trays, and even cups or bowls will do. One day, I soaked some beans in a large mixing bowl to prepare them for cooking. After pouring out the water, I put the bowl of beans aside and became distracted by something else (probably my kids). I forgot about the beans for a few days. When I picked up the bowl again and realized it was full of beans, the bottom two thirds had sprouted.

Growing sprouted beans is almost this simple. I say “almost” because you should rinse them twice a day or so. I didn’t do this with the beans I forgot in the bowl. If I had, close to 100% would have sprouted instead of just two-thirds. Rinsing twice a day provides the seeds with nearly constant moisture. It also helps prevent mold, though mold tends to be more of a problem with sprouts that take a longer to mature.

To sprout beans, soak them first for a night and then drain off the water. Then rinse again and place them in the jar, tray, bag, or sprouter. In a tray, use a single layer of beans seeds at the bottom unless there is a cover that can sustain a more humid environment. In a jar or bag, you can fit a lot of beans, but be mindful that they will expand a bit as they sprout. It’s also best to leave a little space for aeration and rinse water penetration. If you

leave two or three inches at the top of the bag or jar, then the beans can roll around a little as you rinse and drain them. You do not want any violent shaking, but a little rolling around can help ensure more even moisture and no mold.

Once you are ready to eat your sprouted beans, rinse them one last time. If the seed hulls are slipping off the beans, you can give them a vigorous rinsing and remove as many of the hulls as you can. Hulls are edible, but they’re not needed anymore unless you are desperate for extra fiber. In the picture below, you can see the seed husks separating on the lentils, pintos and mung beans, while the soybean hulls have already slipped off. Soybean hulls are the softest and they can make an awful mess in a sprouter as they start to break down.

Sprouted beans can be stored for a day or two in a perforated plastic bag in the vegetable drawer of your refrigerator, but it's best to use them as quickly as possible. Remember, these are living foods and the plants are still trying to grow. Even in the refrigerator they will continue to transform, possibly beyond the stage where they make good eating. This is not a problem if you like your beans with longer sprout tails, but to my taste the texture gets a bit too hairy.

Add raw, sprouted beans to your favorite salads, soups, and cereals. Whenever you eat something else, sprinkle a handful of sprouted beans on top. You'll be increasing the protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals in your diet. Plus, you'll get the raw food enzymes and phytonutrients that bring additional health benefits.

You can also dress up your sprouted beans and make them the center of a great dish. One example is bean dip, which you can make by mashing or blending the beans. Or try this recipe for Raw Sprouted Curried Lentil & Avocado Salad . For a quicker dish, mix your sprouted beans with salsa, pasta sauce, guacamole, yogurt, or whatever sauce or dressing you like to eat.

6. Grain Sprouts: Wheat, Barley, Rye, Oats, and Triticale

As with beans, grain sprouts can be divided into two groups: sprouted grains and more vegetative sprouts. Wheatgrass is an example of the latter and it has its own chapter in this book. Any of the other grains discussed

here, such as barley, rye, oats, and triticale, can also be turned into sprout grass and juiced. When I grow wheatgrass for juicing, I often throw in a handful or rye or barley. Popcorn can be grown into edible shoots and buckwheat into edible shoots as well. The chapter on wheatgrass will address the vegetative sprouts from wheat, rye, barley, oats, and triticale grains. The chapter on microgreens will cover popcorn shoots and buckwheat greens. This chapter will cover the sprouted grains only.

To sprout grains, you can follow the same process as sprouting beans. Wheat, rye, barley, oats, and triticale are all very similar since these cereal grains are closely related. Since the sprouting times are 3-4 days for each one, you can safely mix them if you choose. Sprouted wheat grains (also known as wheatberries) are my favorite, while barley is said to be healthier.

At 3-4 days, these sprouted grains have converted some starches into sweet malt sugars which make them a delicious cereal when eaten plain or with milk, soymilk, almond milk, rice milk, or whatever you pour on your cereal. There is a reason that brewers use malted barley for their beer. Sprouting it first helps break down the grain and releases those sugars that fuel the fermentation. Here is a picture of sprouted wheat grains (wheatberries) at this stage.

Other types of grains can be sprouted, too. Sprouted brown rice has a tough exterior and cannot be eaten without being cooked, though it is very nutritious in this form. Wild rice is so long that many of the grains break before they get to you, but the rest of them sprout well and can be eaten raw, unlike other rice. Hulled buckwheat can be soaked and sprouted for a tasty “grain” that has an amino acid profile more like a legume. Combined with a true grain, it provides a complete protein.

Smaller seeded grains like quinoa, amaranth, and millet can be sprouted also, but most forms are so tiny that they tend to slip through the holes in racks. You can try growing small seeded grains in jars or on trays lined with wet paper towels. This works especially well for quinoa; it germinates so quickly (within 24 hours) that you don’t need to worry about forgetting to keep it moist! Quinoa, which is actually a seed rather than a true grain, contains all of the amino acids your body needs for complete protein.

Here are the approximate sprouting times for each of these grains mentioned above. These are the times required for sprouted grains, not vegetative shoots. As mentioned above, growing vegetative shoots from grains is covered in other chapters.

Amaranth : 2-4 days

Buckwheat : 3-4 days

Cereal Grains : Wheat, Barley, Rye, Oats, and Triticale: 3-4 days

Millet : 1-3 days

Quinoa : 24 hours

Brown Rice : 2-4 days

Wild Rice : 2-4 days

7. Seed and Nut Sprouts: Sunflower, Sesame, Pumpkin, Peanut, and Flax

Many different seeds and nuts can be sprouted. They make nutritious snacks, are tasty ingredients in breads and salads, and can be pureed or mashed into spreads and dips. There is some overlap here with sunflower seeds, which are very versatile and also appear in the microgreens chapter . Peanut sprouts can be grown larger as well. However, with most seeds and nuts, they are sprouted and eaten in just 1-3 days, not grown as longer sprouts or shoots.

Sunflower (2-3 days for sprouted seeds, 5-6 days for young sprouts, 10-12 days for microgreens)

Sunflower sprouts are some of my favorites. They have a rich, nutty flavor and crisp texture that makes for very tasty eating. They go well on sandwiches or in salads, they can be juiced, or they can be eaten plain. Sunflower seeds and their sprouts are high in protein, minerals, and vitamins A, B group, D, and E.

You can eat these at virtually any stage of growth. Of course, you'll need to eat them before they become six foot tall sunflower plants in your garden! If you start with hulled sunflower seeds, you can sprout them for a couple

of days to get sprouted sunflower seeds with little tails. Beyond this stage, you will need to grow sunflower seeds in a tray filled with soil or growing medium, because they shoot up quickly and they need the nutrition and physical support of soil. Sunflower seeds will not perform well in most sprouting devices.

Tender young sprouts can be harvested in five days or so or you can wait until 10 days of age for full-fledged microgreens. If you’re growing them for vegetative sprouts, you can use seeds in the shell rather than hulled seeds. Just sprinkle them on top of wet soil or growing medium, keep them moist, and they will grow.

The sunflowers people normally grow in home gardens produce black-and-white striped sunflower seeds, the kind they sell as a salted snack at baseball games. Another kind, called black oil sunflower seeds, also produces great sprouts and microgreens. If you have pet birds, you may have seen black oil sunflower seeds before; they're a little bit smaller than stripeys and jet black in color. I often feed them to my backyard chickens as a treat .

Unfortunately, not all your seeds will sprout. It can be very difficult to find fresh sunflower seed that germinates at anywhere close to 100%. Keep trying different seed suppliers until you find one with seeds that sprout well. Where sunflower seeds are concerned, I have found the cheap bulk bins at my local health food store to have fresher raw, organic sunflower seeds than any of the specialty suppliers of sprouting seed.

Sesame (2-3 days)

Sprouted sesame seeds are very tasty and they only take 2-3 days to sprout. They have a full sesame flavor and provide a good source of protein and several vitamins. Sesame seeds are quite versatile in the kitchen, where you can add them to both sweet and savory dishes. Because the seeds are so small, you may need to rinse them in a tight-screened colander or strain them from rinse water through a cheese cloth. A jar with a screened lid is perfect for sprouting sesame seeds. A tray with larger holes should be lined with a paper towel or cheesecloth. Harvest and eat these sprouted seed at exactly 2-3 days because they do not taste very good after that.

Pumpkin (1-3 days)

Pumpkin seeds, which are said to promote good prostate health for men, also contain lots of protein, minerals, and vitamins. Follow the normal sprouting methods (jars work quite well) and you can harvest almost right away. As with the other sprouted seeds in this chapter, pumpkin seeds do not keep that well and are best eaten quickly.

Peanut (2-3 days for sprouted peanuts, 5-6 days for peanut shoots)

Peanuts are highly nutritious, packing plenty of protein, minerals, and vitamins A, B group, and E. As with most other seeds and nuts, they grow well in jars and are best eaten right after being sprouted. Follow the normal methods and you will have some yummy sprouted peanuts in just 2-3 days.

Alternatively, you can let them go until about 5-6 days, at which time the peanut sprouts will look a lot like soybean sprouts. They will have shoots several inches long, but these will still be attached to the seed, so you eat both nut and shoot. These have become very popular in Southeast Asia in recent years.

Flax (5-12 days)

Flax seeds make good sprouts, but they can be rather inconvenient to handle. If you get them even the slightest bit wet, they'll stick together, stick to any surface, and stick to you like glue. This makes flax seeds very difficult to rinse (misting with a spray bottle works better). They also stick to your sprouting equipment, making cleanup a lot of fun. I've grown them before and decided afterwards that it wasn't worth the trouble; there are other things I'd prefer to grow and eat than flax sprouts. However, they do make a nice, edible shoot in about 5-12 days, depending on whether you want it smaller or larger.

8. Seasoning Sprouts: Basil, Celery, Cress, Dill, Fenugreek, Mustard, Onion/Garlic, and More

Often known as micro-herbs, a number of very flavorful plants can be grown as sprouts and microgreens. Since most of these will be covered in the next chapter (on microgreens) , I will not waste space discussing them twice. But let me mention that any salad, soup, or other dish can be livened up by "seasoning" it with a sprinkling of raw sprouts. Imagine sprouts that taste like onions or garlic (try scallions or garlic chives), basil, celery, dill, and more. Anise, caraway, coriander, and many other herbs can be sprouted also.

Fenugreek can be grown in any tray or sprouter just like a salad sprout; this herb provides a strong, bitter taste that is used in curry powder, and it is said to be healthy for women's breasts (who knew?). Mustard, cress, and anything in the onion and garlic family can be grown as sprouts in sprout

trays or in soil as microgreens. The other herbs mentioned here are usually grown as microgreens and they are covered in the next chapter.

9. How to Grow Microgreens

Grow a Gourmet Baby Salad, Anytime, Anyplace!

Microgreens are miniature vegetables which are harvested between the sprout and baby leaf stages. Many kinds of plants can be grown and eaten at this immature stage, which generally occurs at around 5-25 days from seed sowing. Lettuce, kale, onions, cabbage, buckwheat, popcorn, peas, sunflower, chard, chia, and basil are just a few examples of diverse, healthy, multi-colored and multi-flavored microgreens that you can grow.

Gourmet restaurants often use microgreens to garnish dishes. They create a fresh and unusual presentation, probably because they are still a novelty to most people. However, microgreens can become that central ingredient in a tasty and delicious salad. If you've seen them for $35 a pound at your local health food store, do not despair. You can grow them on your own for much less.

Unlike sprouts, microgreens need to be grown in soil or soilless medium. You will need a tray of some sort to get started. Nursery seedling flats are the best choice for this, but you can use any container that holds soil at least two inches deep. Split milk cartons, garden pots, and plastic lunch containers are just a few items that can be turned into trays for growing microgreens. Another alternative is to use an automatic sprouter; the Easygreen sprouter provides a 'set it and forget it' growing environment for up to five trays at a time, which can be filled with soil and microgreens.

Fill your tray with two inches of good quality potting soil. You could also use a soilless planting medium for this, such as one with a peat or coconut coir base. Good soil should contain enough minerals to provide the plants with the few days' worth of food they need. If you're using a soilless planting medium, you may need to water with diluted fertilizer. Any liquid fertilizer used for hydroponics should do the trick.

You can grow microgreens indoors or outdoors. The plants will need light, though they can do with less than full blast direct sunlight. If the sun comes in from an angle, the plants will grow towards it. One thing you can do to

alleviate this is to rotate their tray once or twice a day. But if you're not around to move them, don't sweat it. Diagonal sprouts may not make it to the table at a gourmet French restaurant, but they taste the same as upright sprouts.

Artificial lighting is another possibility. I think it's foolish to invest more energy in indoor gardening than you get from it, but there are times when a little bit of extra light can make a big difference. A bulb that supplies 30 watts of output is sufficient to grow about one square foot (1' x 1') of microgreens. The most affordable lighting option is a full spectrum fluorescent bulb or one that has more blue light than red light. A growing bulb in the 5000k-6500k spectrum range is best for growing leafy vegetables, including sprouts. Bulbs should be hung so that they sit 6-10 inches above the plants, as close as possible without burning plants or causing a fire danger.

The best natural light spot for a tray of microgreens is under a window. Indoor temperatures tend to be warmer and more constant than those outdoors. Outside, microgreens will grow fine in any sunny spot. Many urban gardeners report that a balcony or patio bench provides the perfect spot for a tray (while a patio surface itself may get hot enough to bake them).

Wherever you grow your microgreens, make sure to keep them well watered. You can do this with a watering can or a spray bottle. Outside, heat and wind cause a great deal of evaporation, so in warm, dry weather, you need to check the sprouts regularly. In hot sun, microgreens should be shaded. In cold weather, you can cover them at night with some protective

top such as an inverted plastic container. Also, if you have birds that like to snack on greens, you might cover them during the day with some netting.

Microgreen sprouts are very delicate and their stems can break easily. Avoid touching them too much and take care when handling them. Microgreens should be kept out of heavy winds, which can break some of the stalks and put the remaining plants under stress. Light winds are a good thing, however, because the agitation they provide helps plants grow stronger.

Seeds for microgreens can be placed directly on top of wet soil in your tray. Kept moist with regular misting from a spray bottle, they will thrive. Another way to plant them is to reserve part of the soil when you fill the tray. Once you have scattered the seeds on top of the soil in the tray (scatter them as thick as you want), then sprinkle the remainder of the soil over them and moisten this top layer.

Here is a list of plants that make tasty and healthy microgreens and sprouted shoots. Please note that seed suppliers are adding new and exotic varieties all the time, so this is a partial list at best. The day ranges provided for each type of seed are approximate and usually include germination time. In temperatures that are colder, hotter, or more heavily fluctuating than average, the growing times may be a little different.

Amaranth: Mild corn flavor, red/pink varieties often used for color, 16-25 days

Arugula: Peppery, nutty flavor, 16-25 days

Basil: Basil flavor, purple varieties add some nice color, 16-25 days

Beets and Chard: Taste like spinach, green/red, 16-25 days

Bok Choy (Pak Choi) and Tatsoi: Beautiful Asian greens with mild flavor, 10-15 days

Buckwheat: Nutty, mild, delicious greens, 8-12 days

Note: Do not eat massive quantities of buckwheat sprouts or drink their juice, since they can cause a skin condition called fagopyrism, an unusual sensitivity to sunlight. A handful or two of these sprouts shouldn't hurt you, though.

Cress: Peppery spice, 10-15 days

Cabbage, Broccoli, Kale, Kohlrabi: Various kinds, some with purple stems and veins, ranging from mild to spicy, 5-15 days

Celery and Dill: Very flavorful, slow growing, 21-24 days

Garlic Chives: Great garlic flavor, 10-21 days

Mustard Greens: Mustard flavor, 16-25 days

Orach: Another mild spinach relative with red stems and leaves, 16-25 days

Popcorn: Widely eaten in Europe, very sweet little greens, 8-12 days

Purslane: Taste resembles spinach, 16-25 days

Radishes: Taste just like radishes, quite zesty, 12-14 days

Scallion (Green onion): Chive or onion flavor, 16-25 days

Sunflowers: Nutty, aromatic, many peoples' favorite sprout, 8-12 days

10. Wheatgrass Juice From Homegrown Sprouts: How to Grow and Juice Your Own Wheatgrass

A shot of wheatgrass juice is like liquid gold for your body. Two ounces of wheatgrass juice supplies your body with 70% of the vitamin A it needs for a day and 20% of the required iron (as well as being rich in other minerals). Believe it or not, wheatgrass also gives you some protein, though this is a single digit percentage of your daily needs.

The biggest benefits of drinking wheatgrass juice come from its massive dose of chlorophyll and life essence from enzymes and phytonutrients. This is why juice bars around the world sell wheatgrass juice and it's why home wheatgrass juicers (like the one in the picture above) have become so popular in recent years. Green foods with a lot of chlorophyll are anti-inflammatory, detoxifying, help eliminate heavy metals from the body, and have shown promise in treating cancer, digestion problems, blood sugar imbalances, and various chronic ailments.

Wheatgrass has a lot of fans who sing its praises. A few have made wild claims about its health benefits that have not been proven through research or testing. But based on anecdotal evidence, the few studies that do exist, and the fact that wheatgrass contains many nutrients lacking in the modern diet, it makes a great supplement to your health. Also, the chlorophyll in wheatgrass juice has a nearly identical structure to the hemoglobin in human blood, so drinking wheatgrass should help your body renew itself and bring oxygen to its cells (this benefit alone should help fight cancer and other chronic diseases).

Wheatgrass can be grown in water as a sprout, but your plants will be much more successful when grown in soil. It really is a microgreen rather than a sprout. Seeds contain enough energy to sprout for a few days (such as the 3-4 days it takes to get sprouted wheat), but to grow a plant as a microgreen

(such as 7-10 day old wheatgrass) requires more time, nutrition, and physical support for the roots.

Bottom line: you'll grow much fuller, juicier, and happier grass if you grow it in a tray of soil. There are some good sprouting trays available which are designed with wheatgrass in mind . A plastic nursery seedling flat (which is at least two inches deep) works well also. One automatic sprouter, the Easygreen , is capable of handling soil-filled trays. There are several other wheatgrass sprouters on the market as well. Here are some good examples, such as the Sproutman Wheatgrass Grower from Tribest .

The growing process for wheatgrass is the same as for microgreens. Please refer to the previous chapter for specifics on light and soil requirements. Once you have a tray and fill it with soil about two inches deep, you can sow seeds directly on top of the soil and keep them moist. As they sprout, they will root and send up shoots that become bright green blades of grass. Harvest at 7-10 days by clipping the grass with a scissors while using your other hand to hold the tops of the blades you are cutting (to keep them from falling down when cut).

If you leave a bit of green on the blades, cutting them about two inches above the soil, then these leaves can continue to grow. A few days later, you can return and give them a second haircut for your final harvest. After this, you will need to tap out the rooty old soil into your garden or compost bin and start again with some fresh soil for the next sowing of wheatgrass seeds. Here is a picture of some wheatgrass that's been trimmed but is still growing.

A typical nursery flat-sized tray of wheatgrass is about 14” x 18” or 17” square. It should produce 6-12 ounces of wheatgrass juice (which is 3-6 servings of two ounces each). The actual amount will vary somewhat; variables can include the type of wheat seed, quality of soil, amount of water used, growing temperature, number of days to harvest, and quality of wheatgrass juicer.

The type of wheat seed most often used for growing wheatgrass is called Hard Red Winter Wheat, though any variety will work just fine. You can use any other microgreen or sprouted shoot to make “wheatgrass” juice also. Other cereal grains like oats, rye, barley, and triticale can be grown exactly like wheat and even mixed into the same planting. Sunflower sprouts (8-10 days), pea shoots (10-14 days), popcorn shoots (8-10 days)

and buckwheat greens (8-10 days) are some great alternatives. Juicing different plants will add some diversity in taste and nutrition.

These other greens and shoots can be grown in trays just like wheatgrass (see the previous chapter for more info on growing microgreens). Peas should be sprouted first (as described in the chapter on sprouting beans) and then sowed on a tray of soil to grow shoots. Buckwheat greens have a tender, nutty flavor and are great in salads, but you should never juice them or eat them in massive quantities. This is because they can cause a skin condition called fagopyrism, which results in an abnormal skin sensitivity to sunlight. Enjoy buckwheat greens and a little of their juice, both of which are very healthy, but make this a small part of your overall regimen.

Wheatgrass Juicers

Making juice from wheatgrass, or any microgreen, requires a juicer. Most commercial juicers are designed for fruits and vegetables, but are not very successful at making grass juice. Grass blades are very thin and you need to apply a lot of pressure to break the cell walls and release the juice. Typical juicers cannot they rely on a blade or grater that cuts things into small pieces. This process extracts plenty of juice from apples or carrots, but little blades of grass are sent flying by the cutters and the majority of wheatgrass is just wasted.

You need a special wheatgrass juicer, either a manual or electric kind. Most of these models use steel augers that press the wheatgrass blades tightly and extract juice efficiently. The juice comes out one place on the device while

the leaf fiber that's left over exits from another spot (usually the end of the auger tunnel). A good wheatgrass juicer will leave mostly dry chaff as a byproduct, while a lesser model wastes more hard-earned juice with a slushy byproduct. You can find a wide selection of both types in this store .

Before choosing a juicer, take a good look at the reviews for each one, not just the stars but the actual comments that reviewers have written about their experiences with the product. Bear in mind that manual juicers require a lot of pressure via the hand crank since wheatgrass gets tightly squeezed. It's fun at first and provides a bit of needed exercise, but after the first few times, the charm start to wear off. Cranking also takes time, as does the cleanup.

Automatic, electric juicers make the job fast and simple, which is a much better fit for most peoples' schedules. If you're going to make a habit of drinking wheatgrass juice, the sprouting alone will take up some of your time. Will you lose your drive and fall off the wheatgrass wagon if you have to spend another 20 minutes each day grinding with your juicer and cleaning it up? Investing in an electric juicer can really increase the chances that you stick with this new health kick, and that alone may be worth the extra dollars.

On the other hand, manual juicers are a lot cheaper than electric ones, they take up less space, and there are fewer surfaces to clean. You could start with a manual juicer, see how you like it, and then upgrade to an electric juicer if you decide to have a long term relationship with wheatgrass. We all have appliances that seemed like a good idea at the time, but which we rarely use. If this ends up being the case with your wheatgrass juicer, it's better to be out $50 than $250.

I hope this discussion of pros and cons gives you some ideas to think about as you shop around and read reviews. Amazon has the best selection of juicers at the lowest prices, and they have very balanced reviews so you can read up on each of them ; you can check out the same models at different sites, but when they add in shipping costs, you may find that the world's largest retailer is usually the cheapest . In my experience, as with sprouters, a cheaper juicer gets the job done, but the more expensive ones are that way for a reason. You generally get what you pay for in terms of ease of use, quality, and durability.

11. Where to Get the Best Sprouting Seeds

Here are my most trusted sources for high quality sprouting seed. Always buy untreated (and preferably organic) seed. Also check your local health food store's bulk bins. If they have some fresh, raw seeds for a plant you'd like to try, buy a handful or two and try them out. I have found some of my best seeds this way, even though they are not labeled as sprouting seeds. Without packaging or shipping, the ones you buy from local bulk bins tend to be a lot cheaper.

Johnny's Selected Seeds : The best seed source for certain microgreens. This is a garden seed company, so they are accustomed to selling lettuce, broccoli, beets, kale, and the like. If you're looking for miniature leafy vegetables as microgreens, this is the place. www.johnnyseeds.com

Mountain Rose Herbs : This company specializes in organic herbs. They have developed a very good selection of sprouting seeds as well. Their stuff is always the freshest quality and it's organic. www.mountainroseherbs.com

The Sprout People : This family has been in the sprout business for a long time and it is all they do. They really know their sprouts and are extremely dedicated to their quality and customers. You can find traditional and unusual sprouts here, plus lots of their favorite mixes. Their old site was very difficult to navigate, but their new one is tremendously informative. I will admit to borrowing some of their information in my descriptions of certain sprouts. I highly recommend this place. http://sproutpeople.org

Park Seed : Like Johnny's, this is a respected garden seed house. They have a category for sprouting seeds, which is not extensive but includes some of the favorites. http://parkseed.com

Bulk Seed : This site sells sprouting seeds by the pound, including those packaged in buckets for long term storage. They have a pretty good selection. www.bulkfoods.com

12. Where to Find the Best Raw Food Sprout Recipes

What good are all those sprouts if eating them makes you gag? Fortunately, there are many delicious ways to enjoy your sprouts. First, start by adding small amounts of them to other dishes you already know and love. This will help you begin to accept them into your diet. For example, sprinkle some sprouted lentils on your soup, put some broccoli sprouts on your burger, or throw some sunflower microgreens into your salad.

Once you are ready to move forward and make sprouts more of a centerpiece, you will be able to design dishes around them (or with sprouts as a major supporting ingredient). Many of the sprout recipes that involve cooking can be made raw if you choose. And if raw eating is very important to you, then you can start with a raw food recipe (such as chocolate cookies) and add some sprouted nuts, grains or beans. Start with these sites online, which have the best selection of recipes. Then customize your favorite recipes to make them your own.

Sprout Kitchen : http://www.sproutkitchen.com

International Sprout Growers Association (click on Recipes link): http://www.isga-sprouts.org

Sunrise Farms (click on Recipes link): http://www.sunrisefarms.com

The Raw Dessert (add sprouts to some of these sweet treats): http://www.therawdessert.com

The Rawtarian (use the search engine to search for sprout recipes): http://www.therawtarian.com

Raw Guru (click on the Recipes link): http://www.rawguru.com

Yummly : When in doubt, try the world's most powerful recipe search engine, which pulls recipes from more than a dozen major sites (MyRecipes, Food Network, Epicurious, etc.). Yummly is like Google for recipes. Last time I ran a search for the ingredient "bean sprouts", there were over 1,700 results and a lot of them looked really good. You can be more specific also; "bean sprouts wrap" still brought me 88 results…not bad! http://www.yummly.com

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope you have enjoyed this book and learned a bit about growing sprouts and microgreens. Adding more vegetables and raw food to your diet may be the best thing you can do for your health. Unlike starting a

garden outdoors, growing sprouts in your home takes very little time, space, or effort. Most sprouts (other than microgreens) do not even need any soil or direct light. It's a fast and simple way to grow fresh food.

Hopefully, this marks the beginning of a new chapter in your enjoyment of fresh foods. Please feel free to drop me a line at the e-mail address listed on my Amazon author page . Also, if you have a moment, I would really appreciate it if you could write a brief review on there for this book. Your thoughts will help future readers. Thanks and happy sprouting!

My Other Publications

(Click my author name on Amazon to see up to date titles)

My Publications

1. Backyard Chickens for Beginners: Getting the Best Chickens, Choosing Coops, Feeding and Care, and Beating City Chicken Laws (36-page Booklet). [Kindle e-book]

Description from Amazon :

Excellent booklet for beginners on how to start a backyard mini-flock of 2-4 chickens and get fresh eggs every day. Written by the author of the best-selling Fresh Food From Small Spaces book, a former columnist for Urban Farm magazine. (Updated 2012 Version)

Topics include:

• Fresh Eggs Every Day

• How Much Space Do You Need?

• Building or Buying a Coop

• Feeders, Waterers, Nesting Boxes, and Roosts

• Getting Chicks or Chickens

• Feeding Your Chickens

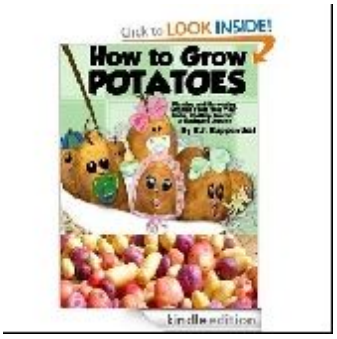
• Tips for Cold Climates

• Health and Safety

• Dealing with Neighbors, City Chicken Laws, and Other Challenges

• Resources: Everything You Need!

2. How to Grow Potatoes: Planting and Harvesting Organic Food From Your Patio, Rooftop, Balcony, or Backyard Garden (26-page Booklet)



Description from Amazon :

Perfect beginners guide to growing potatoes. This booklet explains how to plant and grow organic potatoes for food in the home garden.
Recommended for backyard gardeners and container gardeners with small city-sized yards, patios, balconies, decks, and rooftops.

● Why Grow Potatoes? Six Great Reasons

● Different Kinds of Potatoes (and Where to Get Them)

● Growing in Containers, Raised Beds, and Traditional Rows

● Planting and Hilling Potatoes

● Soil, Fertilizer, and Watering Needs

● Harvesting Potatoes

● Storing Potatoes for Later Use

● *Bonus* : Two Secret Tips for Getting More (and More Delicious) Potatoes

3. [Blueberries in Your Backyard: How to Grow America's Hottest Antioxidant Fruit for Food, Health, and Extra Money](#) (25-page Booklet)

Description from Amazon :

Perfect blueberry growing guide for beginners. This booklet explains how to plant and grow blueberries in the home garden. Recommended for backyard gardeners with small city-sized yards, patios, balconies, decks, and rooftops. (Updated 2012 version)

Topics include:

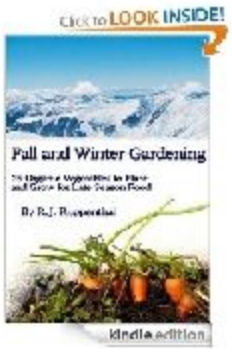
 Why Grow Blueberries? Six Great Reasons

- Blueberries for Every Climate (and where to get them)
- Grow Blueberries Almost Anywhere: Doorsteps, Patios, Balconies, Rooftops, and Yards
- Perfect Blueberry Soil (regular garden soil kills them, but they will thrive in this!)
- How to Plant and Grow Blueberries in Raised Beds and Containers
- Feeding, Watering, and Caring for Your Blueberry Bushes
- Making Extra Money Growing Blueberries

4. Fall and Winter Gardening: 25 Organic Vegetables to Plant and Grow for Late Season Food

Description from Amazon:

Complete guide to growing organic vegetables for a fall and winter garden. This book explains which vegetables can survive in cold weather and how to grow them. Recommended for backyard gardeners and container gardeners who want to grow food for fresh eating all year round.



Topics Include

- Introduction to Late Season Vegetable Gardening
- 25 Vegetables for Cool Seasons
- Starting Vegetables From Seed
- When to Plant in Your Area
- Preparing the Soil and Fertilizing
- Garden Rows, Raised Beds, and Containers
- Extending Your Season
- Harvesting and Storing Your Produce
- Resources: More Information

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